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TAGS: PREL MOPS MARR IZ IR TU

SUBJECT: EUCOM D/COM GENERAL WARD'S INTRODUCTORY CALLS IN
ANKARA

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

Summary

¶1. (C) EUCOM Deputy Commander General William Ward restated EUCOM's commitment to work closely with Turkey on security issues during November 7 introductory calls on CHOD Yasar Buyukanit, DCHOD Ergin Saygun, and MFA Deputy Undersecretary for Security Affairs Rafet Akgunay. Buyukanit described his unprecedented visit to Greece and expressed his satisfaction with U.S. - Turkey bilateral military relations. On Afghanistan, he emphasized the importance of not alienating the population, while expressing frustration at the slow pace of reconstruction there. DCHOD Saygun said he was particularly concerned about the impact of growing friction between Russia and Georgia on regional stability and energy security. On Iran, Saygun expressed concern for worsening Iranian behavior in the region but alluded to Iran-Turkey cooperation in border operations against PKK terrorists. MFA D/US Akgunay stressed Turkey's concerns about the possible break-up of Iraq as well as instability in the Caucasus. He said Turkey would continue to be cooperative on Black Sea security. Ward asked for Akgunay's assistance with the U.S. request for additional CFE flank entitlements from Turkey to facilitate U.S. training activities in Romania and Bulgaria.
End Summary

CHOD Buyukanit - Don't Alienate the Afghans

¶2. (C) Buyukanit described his recent visit to his counterpart in Athens as unprecedented and productive, noting that militaries on both sides of the Aegean understand each other despite political disputes. In the same manner, U.S. - Turkey bilateral military relations have weathered political storms. Turning to Afghanistan, Buyukanit expressed concern for resurgent Taliban activity in the south, associating this with the slow pace of economic reconstruction. He deflected SACEUR and U.S. appeals for additional Turkish forces. He described Turkey's support for the Afghan people since the days of Ataturk in the 1920s, stressing that Turkey is careful not to alienate the Afghan population. He suggested that other ISAF contributors need to keep in mind the key goal of winning the hearts of the people. Referring to his own experience fighting the PKK in northern Iraq, Buyukanit

said Turkey has sought to avoid alienating innocent civilians in all of its anti-PKK operations.

DCHOD Saygun - Caucasus Tensions, Iran and Lebanon

¶ 13. (C) Saygun raised concerns with growing tensions in the Caucasus, particularly between Russia and Georgia. He noted increasing Russian pressure on Georgia, especially on natural gas, and worried about the effects on stability and energy security in the region. Saygun characterized Iranian behavior in the region as worsening; Iran is also capable of using energy as a weapon. He noted, however, that the Iranian border is Turkey's quietest and, in contrast to the situation in Iraq, Turkey can discuss matters with Iran. He alluded to Turkish-Iranian cooperation along their respective borders with Iraq in combating PKK terrorists operating there.

¶ 14. (C) Saygun opined that the U.S. had lost influence in the Middle East to Iran, pointing out that Iran has gained ground on the Arabian peninsula through its ties to Iraqi Shi'a. Many Muslims now look approvingly at Iran as a symbol of resistance to the U.S. and Israel. Saygun claimed that the division between Sunnis and Shi'a is greater than that between Muslims and Christians. He expressed frustration with Turkey's relations with Iraq, complaining that there is no reliable Iraqi government authority for Turkey to talk to. Meanwhile, he pointed out, Turkey has lost numerous truck drivers to terrorist attacks in Iraq.

U.S. Needs Regional Allies

¶ 15. (C) Turning to U.S. - Turkey ties, Saygun commented that the U.S. has grown "too big" since the end of the Cold War. Allies cannot keep up. The U.S. can load troops on its transport aircraft and send them around the world, but must remember most other allies cannot do this as easily. Therefore, successful combined operations in the NATO context are difficult. In this context, Saygun concluded, the U.S. needs to cultivate regional allies on which it can count.

MFA - Iraq, Caucasus, and Black Sea

¶ 16. (C) During his call on MFA D/US Akgunay, Gen Ward noted the strains in bilateral relations since the Iraq war but thanked Turkey for its assistance and cooperation on Iraq. Akgunay stressed the Turkish government's fears for the consequences of Iraq's breaking apart, focusing on Kirkuk as a microcosm of all of Iraq's ethnic and sectarian problems and the need to find a widely acceptable solution to Kirkuk's status. Akgunay stated that the GOT welcomes the collaboration between U.S. Special Envoy Ralston and Turkish envoy Baser and is showing restraint, hoping the initiative will have positive and concrete results. A good outcome to the Ralston mission would go far to change anti-U.S. public sentiment, he asserted.

¶ 17. (C) Responding to EUCOM POLAD Ambassador Yates' question about the situation in the Caucasus, Akgunay noted that Russia is on the defensive while the FSU states often exercise their freedoms in a provocative manner. Turkey is encouraging all sides not to push Russia into a corner. Akgunay stressed that Turkey supports NATO goals for the region. On Black Sea issues, Akgunay stressed that Turkey is not conspiring with Russia to keep NATO out of the Black Sea. NATO has been in the Black Sea since 1952, the year Turkey joined the Alliance. Akgunay noted that Operation Black Sea Harmony is providing a constant stream of information to NATO commands. Turkey understands Russia's historical drive for a warm water port but is trying to convince Russia "this is not the 17th century."

CFE Flank Entitlements

¶8. (C) Raising the U.S. request for CFE flank entitlements, Ward expressed appreciation for Turkey's willingness to contribute 63 tank entitlements from Turkey's headroom. The U.S. needs more help, however, to make up a shortfall of some 75 armored combat vehicle (ACV) entitlements. Akgunay replied that Turkey's offer 63 tank entitlements had been the maximum the Turkish military felt it could provide after thorough consideration. He undertook to reconsider the Turkish offer following the HLTF meeting in Brussels.

¶9. (U) This cable was cleared by General Ward.

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WILSON